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MOVING TOWARDS UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION AND LITERACY

A co-operative programme to foster universal primary education and literacy

Summary

UNICEF and UNESCO have formed a joint working group to intensify their continuing co-operation in fostering universal primary education and literacy (UPEL). The first phase of this initiative involves a five-year period of assistance for activities in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nicaragua and Peru. Each country proposal has been worked out with the national Government and the technical collaboration of UNESCO. This paper provides a full background to the co-operative programme presented in brief form in document E/ICEF/P/L.2190(REC) and the country proposals contained in documents E/ICEF/P/L.2191 to 2195(REC).

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

One out of every two children in the developing countries today does not enjoy the benefit of a full cycle of primary education; four out of ten adults (and six out of ten women) cannot read or write. This lack of access to even a minimum level of education for a large part of humanity constitutes deprivation on a massive scale of a basic human right.

Evidence available from various parts of the world indicates that educating women is one of the most effective ways of enhancing the welfare of children: it leads to families of appropriate size, to the reduction of child mortality and morbidity and to the improvement of child nutrition and school participation and performance.

Expansion of basic services in primary health care, water supply, sanitation and nutrition, which requires popular participation and individual and collective self-help efforts, has been impeded by the extremely low level of education among the beneficiaries. The revolution in child health - the prospect of halving the high infant and child death rates through the adoption of simple and affordable techniques, which UNICEF's The State of the World's Children 1982-83 report has shown to be within reach - cannot be fully achieved and the results cannot be long-lasting without advances in women's literacy, children's primary education and the community's general level of education.

The rate of progress during the past two decades in expanding primary education and literacy, although very substantial both in absolute numbers and relative proportions, does not offer good prospects for achieving universal primary education and literacy by the end of the century. The goal can be approached only through a determined and concerted effort by national Governments, with vigorous and increased assistance from the international community (including support for recurrent costs, particularly in the poorest developing countries), to accelerate the expansion of educational opportunities and maintain the minimum standards of learning achievement.

The importance and urgency of the problem have led UNICEF to consider intensifying its activities in education and launching a special effort for the universalization of primary education and the reduction of large-scale illiteracy. To this end, within the framework of general co-operation between UNESCO and UNICEF, a Joint Working Group on Universalization of Primary Education and Literacy (UPEL) was set up in June 1982.

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Main tasks and strategies

The Joint Working Group has agreed that high priority must be given to:

(a) Keeping the child in school for the full cycle of primary education and enforcing a minimum standard of learning achievement;

(b) Ensuring equitable participation by all in education, particularly marginal and underprivileged groups;

(c) Undertaking special national programmes in literacy followed by continuing post-literacy and non-formal education opportunities;

(d) Reorganizing the content and methods of primary education and literacy programmes so that they contribute towards the solution of urgent problems in such areas as health, nutrition, protection of the environment and infant and child mortality.

The strategies of action suggested by the Working Group are the following:

(a) Creating a favourable national and international climate for action. The main elements of this strategy are national and international advocacy, consciousness-raising and mobilization of resources through such activities as the analysis of present situation and trends, exchange of information and experiences, workshops and seminars for policy-makers and technical personnel, and systematic use of the communication media;

(b) Retention of pupils and enforcing minimum learning standards in primary schools. Intensified efforts will be needed to reduce drop-out, to keep pupils in school until the end of the primary cycle and to establish and maintain minimum standards of teaching and learning to ensure a minimum level of proficiency in basic reading, writing and calculation;

(c) Eliminating disparities and serving the disadvantaged. Specific approaches should include analysing and publicizing the degree and nature of inequities among social groups, geographical regions and sexes, reducing costs of participating in education and improving the location and distribution of facilities;

(d) Strengthening links among different elements of a basic level of education. The ways in which early childhood programmes, primary education and literacy and post-literacy programmes support each other should be identified and common approaches to making education relevant to local needs and to promoting community responsibility for education should be followed. The primary school should be developed into a community learning centre;

(f) Supporting basic services. Primary schools and literacy programmes should be the means by which knowledge, information and skills with a bearing on the living condition of people are acquired. Mutually supportive interaction between education and other basic services can be strengthened by promoting organizational structures which facilitate local autonomy, popular participation and mobilization of local resources;

(g) Mobilizing resources and improving cost-effectiveness. Economic feasibility (relying on internal resources in the longer term), cost-saving approaches and mobilization of untapped resources must be important considerations in all programmes. Ways of bridging the gap between minimum resource requirements and resource availability at national and local levels and such possibilities as augmenting resources through productive activities within educational programmes should be explored. External resources that may be available should be used in a manner which leads to the largest possible multiplier effect;

(h) Improving planning and management. Building up the institutional capacity to plan and manage systems of universal education and developing an organizational structure that allows a high degree of local responsibility and community participation should be important features of programmes.

Intensified UNESCO-UNICEF co-operation

UNESCO and UNICEF, in line with the declared priorities of both organizations, will intensify their co-operation in a continuing effort to foster UPEL. The Joint Working Group will remain the focal point of this intensified effort and will continue to ascertain how the resources of the two organizations can be used to the maximum advantage and how the national plans and programmes can be assisted effectively.

In addition to, and in support of, direct collaboration with national efforts, the two organizations, deploying their regular resources as well as such special contributions as may be available, will undertake the following international and regional activities: promotion of exchange of relevant information, experiences and lessons; investigation of operational issues through surveys, studies and analyses; collaboration in experimental and pilot application of approaches and methods and their systematic monitoring; selective training activities at regional and international levels; appropriate forms of international and national advocacy and consciousness-raising efforts; and facilitating co-ordination and co-operation among organizations and agencies concerned with primary education and literacy.

Country activities

An initial outcome of the intensified UNESCO-UNICEF co-operation to support UPEL is the preparation of proposals for assistance over a five-year span to five countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nicaragua and Peru (E/ICEF/P/L.2191 to 2195(REC)). Each of these countries has demonstrated their commitment to large-scale expansion and qualitative improvement of primary education and literacy programmes. Each has sizeable populations of children and adults who are currently deprived of education and each is in need of external support to carry out their national programmes. It is expected that in subsequent years other countries in similar circumstances, particularly those included in the list of "the least developed and the most seriously affected", will participate in the special co-operative programme.

Each proposal has been prepared jointly by the national Government and the UNICEF country office with the technical collaboration of UNESCO. The proposals identify high priority components of national programmes which are in need of external technical and financial support and they complement or supplement other external assistance projects under way or under consideration.

The proposals describe, in broad terms, the objectives, the implementation approach, organizational arrangements and resource requirements for each programme. In each case, the objectives, implementation steps and the means of effectively utilizing available resources require further elaboration. After the availability of resouces is ensured, a national workshop in each country will be arranged to further review the proposals and to work on the details of implementation.

Recommendation

It is proposed that the Executive Board:

(a) Endorse the special initiative of UNICEF, in co-operation with UNESCO, to support and promote national and international efforts for achieving the goal of universal primary education and literacy, and to apply in its programmes the suggested strategies for progress towards this objective within the framework of UNICEF's overall goal of promoting a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of children; and

(b) Support the Executive Director's plan to ensure that UNICEF plays an active role, in collaboration with UNESCO, other concerned organizations (inter-governmental and non-governmental, international, regional and national) and national Governments, in promoting a concerted international effort to achieve the goal of "education for all" by the end of the century.

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I. BACKGROUND

Need for a new initiative

One out of every two children in the developing countries today does not enjoy the benefit of a full cycle of primary education. Four out of ten adults (and six out of ten women) cannot read or write. These proportions are substantially higher in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia which together account for one quarter of the world population. This situation poses a major challenge to the international community.

Education is a valuable end in itself, a basic human right and of central importance to the whole development process. The lack of access to even a minimum level of education for a large part of the human race not only constitutes deprivation on a massive scale of a basic human right but also inevitably leads to deprivation of other basic needs and serious undermining of the potential for individual fulfilment and national development. Evidence from many parts of the world shows that educating women is one of the most effective ways of enhancing the welfare of children because it leads to families of appropriate size, to reduced child mortality and morbidity, and to improved child nutrition and school participation and performance.

Expansion of basic services in primary health care, water supply, sanitation and nutrition, which requires popular participation and individual and collective self-help efforts, has been impeded by the extremely low level of education among the beneficiaries. The revolution in child health - the prospect of halving the high infant and child death rates by the adoption of simple and affordable techniques which UNICEF's State of the World's Children 1982-83 report has shown to be within reach - cannot be fully achieved and the results cannot be long-lasting without advances in women's literacy, children's primary education and the community's general level of education (see table 1 and figure 1).

The rate of progress during the past two decades in expanding primary education and literacy, although very substantial both in absolute numbers and relative proportions, does not offer the promise of achieving universal primary education and literacy by the end of the century. If recent trends continue, as many as 40 per cent of all primary age children still would be without the benefit of a complete primary education even with considerable expansion of educational opportunities. The number of illiterates is projected to rise to over 900 million by the end of the century. Unfortunately the current world-wide economic recession and the consequent cuts in national budgets, particularly in the social sectors, have slowed down the rate of progress of the recent past, causing the goals of universal primary education and literacy to recede further. UNICEF country offices have frequently reported not only reduction of national budgets in education and other social services but also inadequate utilization of external assistance due to the shortage of counterpart national resources. This leads to the dilution of even the minimum standards in facilities, staff, equipment and materials for education.

Table 1

Female literacy (FL) and infant mortality rates (IMR) in developing countries

Note: The countries are shown within each block in descending order of IMR and they are roughly located in their appropriate place on a vertical IMR scale.

IMR 1975-80 \ FL 1980	Very low FL Countries (15% and under)	Low FL Countries (16%-30%)	Middle FL Countries (31%-50%)	High FL Countries (51%-80%)	Very High FL Countries (over 80%)
Very high-IMR Countries (150 and over)			Kampuchea		
	Upper Volta	Sierra Leone			
	Afghanistan				
	Gambia				
		Malawi			
	Guinea				
	Yemen Arab Rep.				
		Angola			
	Mali	Benin			
	Nepal	Liberia			
	Chad	Central African Rep.			
	Guinea Bissau	Dem. Yemen			
	Senegal				
	Niger				
	Ethiopia				
	Somalia				
High-IMR Countries (100-149)		Nigeria		Swaziland	
		Bangladesh		Bolivia	
		Ivory Coast	Laos		
	Sudan	Pakistan	Congo		
	Burundi	India	Turkey		
	Saudi Arabia	Algeria			
		Haiti	Gabon		Lesotho
		Mozambique			
		Iran	Zaire		
		Togo	Cameroon		
		Morocco			
		Papua New Guinea	Rwanda	Zambia	
		Egypt			
		United Rep. of Tanzania	Ghana		
			Libya		
			Tunisia		
			Uganda		
Middle-IMR Countries (50-99)				Indonesia	
				Nicaragua	
				Honduras	
			Kenya	Peru	
			Cape Verde	Botswana	
				Ecuador	
			Iraq	El Salvador	
				Brazil	
			Guatemala	Zimbabwe	
				Madagascar	
				Jordan	
				Dominican Rep.	
			Syrian Arab Rep.		
				Mexico	Colombia
					Mongolia
					Philippines
		United Arab Emirates	Bahrain		Thailand
Low-IMR Countries (less than 50)					Paraguay
				Sri Lanka	Guyana
					Argentina
				Venezuela	Chile
				Lebanon	Uruguay
				Fiji	Suriname
				Mauritius	Rep. of Korea
				Kuwait	Panama
				Malaysia	Trinidad
					Jamaica
					Costa Rica
					Barbados
					Cuba
					Cyprus
				Hong Kong	
				Singapore	

The following countries are not included because of the absence of data: Belize, Bhutan, Burma, Comores, China, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Maldives, Mauritania, Namibia, Oman, Qatar, Sao Tome and Principe, Samoa, Seychelles, Viet Nam, various Pacific and Caribbean Islands.

Information sources: Female Literacy Rates: UNESCO Office of Statistics
Infant Mortality Rates: UN Population Division

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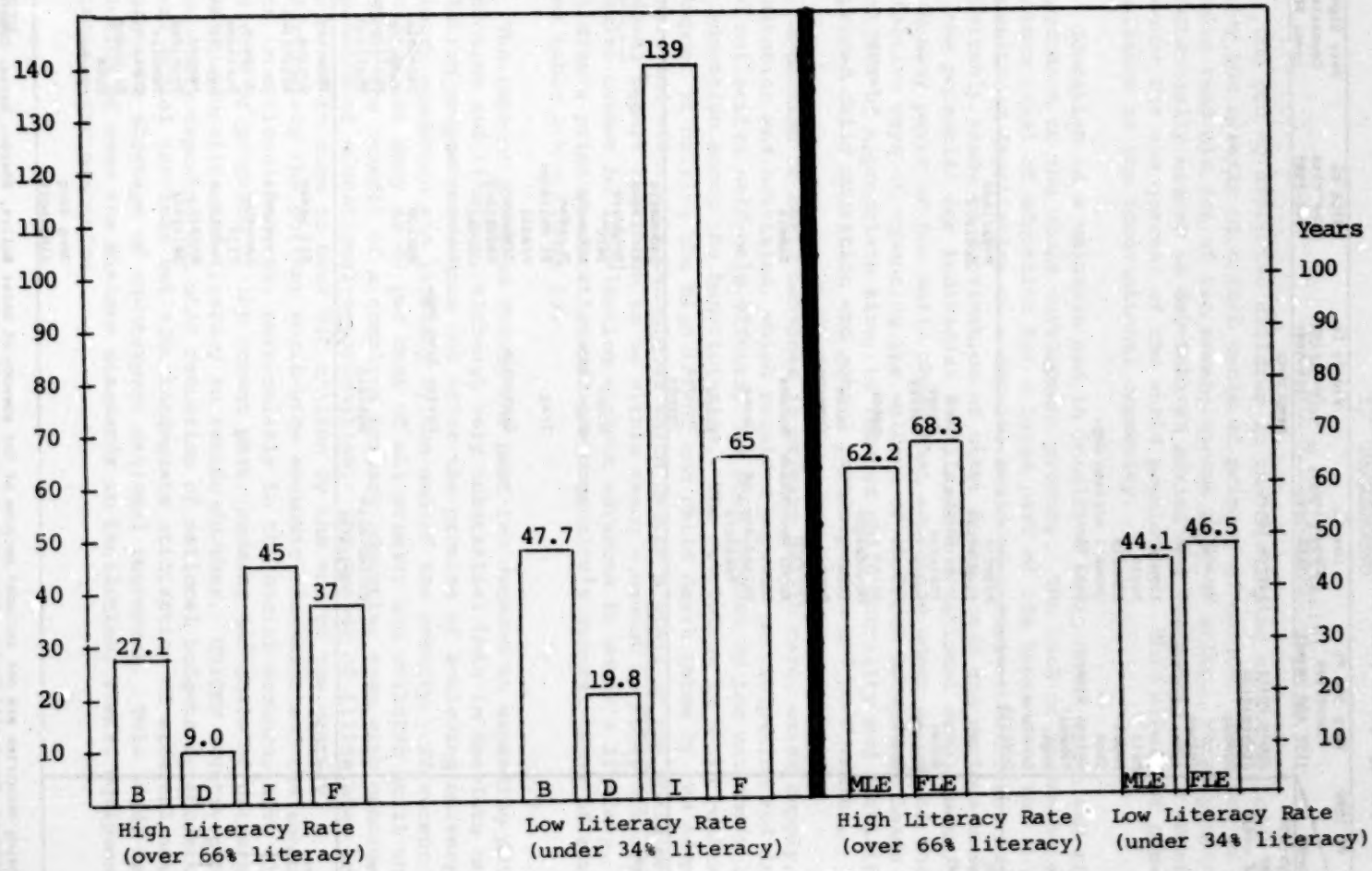
FIGURE 1

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS FOR GROUPS
OF COUNTRIES WITH HIGH AND LOW LITERACY RATES



B = crude birth rate per thousand
D = crude death rate per thousand
I = infant mortality rate per thousand live births
F = total fertility rate (magnified ten-fold for graphic representation)

MLE = male life expectancy at birth
FLE = female life expectancy at birth

Source: E.A. Fisher, "Illiteracy in Context", Prospects, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1982

Only a determined and concerted effort by national Governments with vigorous and increased assistance from the international community (including support for recurrent costs in the poorest developing countries in particular) can accelerate the expansion of educational opportunities and maintain the minimum standards of learning achievement so that the goal of universal primary education and literacy is approached by the end of the century.

Resurgence of interest

Some disillusionment perhaps set in a few years ago when the visions and plans of the 1960s for universal primary education and the eradication of illiteracy remained unfulfilled. Despite important progress in terms of aggregate statistics, a large part of the population in the developing countries remained very far behind the global targets. More recently, however, there seems to have been a resurgence of interest and there are signs of a return to the conviction that primary education and adult literacy must be seen as essential elements of national development plans.

The strategies for the Third United Nations Development Decade explicitly stress the need for progress towards universal primary education and the reduction of illiteracy. One of the central features of UNESCO's medium-term plan for 1984-1989 is a major programme entitled "Education for All". This reflects existing and anticipated educational goals and priorities in different regions of the world (e.g. the Mexico Declaration of 1979 leading to the Major Project in Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, the 1982 Harare Declaration on Universal Primary Education and Literacy of the African States, expected emphasis on primary education and literacy in the UNESCO-organized 1983 Arab States' Ministerial Conference, and adoption of the theme of "education for all" for the 1984 Asia and the Pacific Ministers' Meeting and for the 1984 International Conference on Education). The need for a larger investment in primary education and literacy was emphatically put forward in the World Bank's World Development Report of 1980, built on the theme of "human development", and was re-emphasized in the 1981 and 1982 reports. Despite the economic hard times, a number of national Governments, including those of some of the least developed countries, have mounted national literacy drives and have adopted programmes for improving and expanding primary education, seeking international financial assistance (both grants and loans) for this purpose.

Intensified UNESCO-UNICEF co-operation

The importance and urgency of the problem and the signs of renewed interest in it have prompted UNICEF to consider intensifying its activities in education and launching a special effort for universalization of primary education and reduction of large-scale illiteracy. In April 1982, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Director of UNICEF met and agreed that, within the framework of the continuing co-operation of the two organizations, special attention would be given to efforts to assist countries to achieve universalization of primary education and literacy. To that end, a Joint Working Group on the Universalization of Primary Education and Literacy was set up in June 1982 with the general task of ascertaining how co-operation could maximize the impact of the two organizations' efforts in primary education and literacy and how countries could be better assisted in their efforts to use their resources effectively and to mobilize additional resources.

The Working Group has prepared this paper which presents the magnitude and the dimensions of the problem, indicates obstacles to progress and outlines strategies for solutions. The Working Group, in collaboration with the regional and field offices of both organizations and with the participation of concerned Governments, has also formulated, for initial action, proposals for support of projects in a small number of countries selected on the basis of their on-going national efforts in primary education and literacy and the urgency of need for external assistance. Summaries of the proposals are presented in the annex.

II. MAGNITUDE AND DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

Global trends 1960-1980

During the period 1960-1980, total enrolment in primary education in developing countries increased by 142 per cent while the primary school age-population (ages 6 to 11) grew by 72 per cent*. The gross enrolment ratio in primary education in developing countries increased from 61 per cent to 86 per cent during the same period. Although these figures reflect real progress spurred by social demand for education and the increasing commitment of national authorities, they do not reveal the whole picture.

The gross enrolment ratio overstates the situation in varying degrees because a large proportion (sometimes as high as 40 per cent) of the enrolled students are older or younger than the specified age group. There is also a wide gap between pupil registration and actual pupil attendance - estimated at only about 60 per cent of registration in parts of Africa and South Asia. The high dropout of students between first grade and the end of the primary cycle - as high as 80 per cent in some cases - reduces drastically the rate of effective participation in primary education. Precise calculation of participation in a full cycle of primary education of the corresponding age group is not available, but a resonable assumption is that one out of two children in developing countries does not complete primary education.

Illiteracy goes hand in hand with low participation in primary education. Most of the children who do not enter primary education and a large number of those who drop out early become illiterate adults. The total number of illiterates in the world over age 15 was estimated to be 824 million in 1980, of whom 801 million or 97 per cent live in developing countries. This means that four out of ten youths and adults in developing countries cannot read and write. The ratio has improved somewhat since 1970 (from 48 per cent to 40 per cent illiteracy in 1980), but the absolute number of illiterates increased from 731 million to 801 million.

Regional patterns

Of the 1980 adult population in Africa, 60 per cent were illiterate, 37 per cent in Asia and 20 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The problem of providing primary education is also the gravest in Africa and Asia, notwithstanding the dramatic increases in the gross enrolment ratios over the last decades.

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* Excluding China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Sub-Saharan Africa contains the highest number of countries with primary education enrolment ratios substantially below the average of 85.5 for all developing countries in 1980. South Asia, with a smaller number of countries, has a large population and accounts for a large share of both the children of the world who do not participate in primary education and of the illiterate population.

The problem of inadequate "holding power" of primary schools is acute in both South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The populous countries of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in South Asia experience a very high dropout rate in primary education, particularly between grades one and two. In Bangladesh, for example, out of every 100 pupils who started grade one in 1974 only 20 reached grade five in 1979. In 1970, of a group of 100 students in Africa, only the folowing numbers reached grade six: 45 in Burundi, 28 in Chad, 40 in the Central African Republic, 54 in Upper Volta and 40 in Zaire.

Table 2

"Adjusted" gross enrolment ratios (GER) in first level education and illiteracy rates (IR)

Region	1970		1980	
	GER	IR	GER	IR
World	84.6	32.9	90.8	28.6
Developing countries a/	74.3	48.0	85.5	40.3
Africa	57.0	71.1	78.9	60.3
Asia	76.8	43.8	84.1	37.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	92.3	27.3	102.3	20.3
Arab States b/	65.7	72.7	81.7	62.1

a/ Not including China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
b/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

Note: "Adjusted" means that the different lengths of the primary cycle in different countries have been taken into account.

Source: Office of Statistics, UNESCO, Paris.

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Quality and relevance

A large number of children in developing countries, even when they have the opportunity to go to school, are subjected to an educational experience which, to say the least, provides only a weak basis for permanent literacy, numeracy or further learning. In some countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, according to experienced observers, the situation has reached a crisis because a substantial proportion of children are unable to read and write even after going to primary schools for four or five years. The pressure to expand the system without the necessary resources to pay for teachers, facilities and instructional materials have caused this situation.

An international evaluation of educational achievement in 19 countries has shown that pupils in developing countries achieved far less than those in the developed countries, in all of the tested subjects. A typical finding showed the mean score for students in a developing country to be in the bottom 5 or 10 per cent of students from a developed country. Quality of instruction is a relative concept and it can sometimes be used for an excuse for restrictive and elitist education. At the same time, however, primary education can become a meaningless and wasteful exercise if a minimum standard of learning achievement is not enforced and if students fail to learn to read and write, thus failing to acquire minimum skills for life and further learning.

Another aspect of quality of education is its relevance to the life and circumstances of the learner. When disadvantaged people are unable to provide themselves with the basic necessities and are deprived of a minimum level of essential amenities and services, they are bound to regard all public services as irrelevant unless such services relate to the urgent questions of survival and human dignity. Education - in a situation of extreme poverty and deprivation - can be relevant to the extent it is concerned with health and nutrition, shelter, food production and income-generation, water supply, road building, protection of the environment and similar basic community needs. The primary school or literacy programme obviously cannot solve all social and economic problems, but they likewise cannot ignore these vital concerns and still claim to be relevant to the life and circumstances of the people to be served. In the poorer regions of the developing countries, primary education is one of the few and sometimes the only public service with which the people have contact. Primary education also represents a relatively high proportion of the total public expenditure aimed at reaching the masses. In remote and inaccessible regions of the country, primary schools are often the only nuclei of educated people. There are, therefore, compelling reasons to consider how the primary school can be an instrument of change and development for their communities and localities.

In the case of literacy programmes, critical concerns include how the learners can achieve a functionally useful level of proficiency in literacy and numeracy, how opportunities for further learning and improvement of skills can be provided after the initial literacy lessons, and how the skills and knowledge acquired can be applied to the improvement of the learner's living conditions. The greatest danger faced by literacy efforts is the relapse of neoliterates into illiteracy because of the absence of relevant and useful reading materials and the lack of opportunities for using the new skills in their daily life.

Continuity

In both primary education and literacy programmes, a common concern is how the initial phase can be followed up with further opportunities for formal or non-formal learning so that the learning process does not end with the completion of a course. The elements of reading and writing can be relatively quickly learned (how quickly depends upon the correspondence between the spoken language of the learner and the written form used in the literacy programme). However, unless the skills are regularly used, they rapidly atrophy and the learner relapses into illiteracy.

Continuity in the case of primary education is not simply a question of transition rates from primary to secondary education since in most developing countries it is unrealistic to expect anything approaching universal secondary education in the present socio-economic context. For those who complete primary education, the pertinent question, therefore, is how the life experiences that follow can combine non-formal practical learning with appropriate productive and social roles.

Post-literacy activities and diverse non-formal learning opportunities to consolidate and improve the gains made in literacy courses and primary schools must be seen as essential follow-up without which the initial efforts may not achieve their purposes. Plans and programmes, including investment plans for primary education and literacy activities, need to be broadly conceived with the aim of promoting and sustaining an environment for life-long learning. Thus primary education and the literacy programme, serving as the foundation for further acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills which have application in life, would constitute what may truly be called basic education.

Outlook for the year 2000

If the trends of the last two decades continue, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the primary level in the developing countries will be 95 per cent by the year 2000. In Africa and Asia the ratios will be 87 and 89 per cent respectively and the female participation rate in all developing countries will be 87 per cent (see tables 3 and 4).

However, as noted earlier, the problem is not simply one of nominal enrolment ratios which themselves are overestimates (due to inclusion of children outside the age-group in the statistics). The nominal enrolment ratio provides a misleading picture of primary education performance (because of high drop out and poor learning achievement for many children in many countries). Reliable and comparable international statistics are not available for establishing the true performance of primary education systems in the developing countries. This in itself is indicative of the present emphasis on nominal enrolment rather than actual performance. But from available indications (after taking account of adjustments for overestimation in GER, drop-out rates and repetition rates), a plausible estimate would be that with an overall GER of 86 per cent in 1980, only half of primary age children actually complete the cycle of primary education in the developing countries. If the present trend continues, with 95 per cent GER in the year 2000, it is unlikely that more than six out of ten children will be the beneficiaries of a complete cycle of primary education. The situation obviously would be worse for females and in the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

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Table 3

Adjusted gross enrolment ratios at the first level of education (both sexes) in major regions of the world, 1969-2000

Region	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
World total a/	77.5	84.6	90.8	94.1	96.4
Developed countries	105.8	106.4	106.2	105.1	103.9
Developing countries a/	60.8	74.3	85.5	90.9	94.5
Africa	44.2	57.0	78.9	87.3	91.9
Asia a/	67.4	76.8	84.1	88.5	91.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	73.4	92.3	102.3	105.6	107.4
Arab States b/	50.4	65.7	81.7	89.7	94.0

a/ Not including China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

b/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

Note: The term "adjusted" indicates that the population groups used in deriving these ratios for a particular region have been obtained by taking into account the organizational structure of education of each country in that region.

Source: UNESCO. A Summary Statistical Review of Education in the World: 1960-1980. Document No. ED/BIE/CONFINTED 38/Ref. 1. Paris, 1981 (tables 10 and 24).

Table 4

Female enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment (both sexes) at the first level of education in major regions of the world, 1960 - 2000

Region	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
World total a/	44	45	45	46	47
Developed countries	49	49	49	49	49
Developing countries a/	39	42	44	45	46
Africa	37	40	44	46	47
Asia a/	39	41	42	44	45
Latin America and the Caribbean	48	49	49	49	49
Arab States b/	34	36	41	44	45

a/ Not including China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

b/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

Note: These percentages are based on standardized enrolments up to 1980 and projections for the period 1980 - 2000.

Source: Same as for table 3 (tables 7 and 23).

It is evident that, on the whole, the priority in primary education has to be on keeping children in school until the end of the primary cycle and ensuring a minimum level for their learning achievement. Obviously, efforts have to continue to bring education to marginal groups now unreached because of geographical isolation, ethnic affiliation or socio-economic situation. This must be done in all developing regions of the world, but especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Projections for literacy show that by 2000 about 28 per cent of the population age 15 and over in the developing countries will still be illiterate. Considerable geographical variations will exist, from a relatively low 10 per cent in Latin America to 40 per cent in the Arab Sates and 35 per cent in both Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (see tables 5, 6, 7 and 8).

In combating illiteracy, the strategy has to be more than mere numerical coverage. Arrangements for literacy and post-literacy learning opportunities must be established to disseminate functional knowledge and skills relevant to the learner's life and environment. Again, special efforts will be needed for marginal groups not currently served, including youth and women, particularly in the least developed countries.

III. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

Financing and costs

The largest gaps in the provision of primary education and the highest rates of adult illiteracy are in the poorest countries. However, the correlation among countries between income levels and primary enrolment ratios or literacy rates is not consistently high. Some countries at similar levels of income in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, have significantly different primary enrolment ratios. Conversely, some countries have similar primary enrolment ratios or literacy rates even though they have quite different income levels. In sum, variation in the gross national product (GNP) per capita, though important, is not in itself sufficient to explain differences between countries in the provision of primary education or progress in reducing illiteracy.

A critical factor which determines what any given level of GNP per capita can support as regards primary enrolments or literacy activity is costs. Among countries at the same level of GNP per capita, those with the higher enrolment ratios in primary education are generally also those with the lower primary education unit costs, and vice versa.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the ratio of primary education unit recurrent costs to GNP per capita ranges from 10 per cent to nearly 50 per cent. Most of the countries with expenditures at the lower end of this range have achieved universal primary education or are very close to doing so. None of the countries at the higher end of the expenditure range has so far achieved a primary enrolment ratio greater than 50 per cent. But for some poor countries, particularly in Africa, the high relative unit costs and high proportions of the national budget allocated for primary education (yet failing to approach universal primary education) are a reflection of a very low absolute per capita GNP.

Table 5

Estimates and projections of the number of illiterates (both sexes) aged 15 years and over in major regions of the world, 1970-2000 (in millions)

Region	1970	1980	1990	2000
World total	760	824	882	912
Developed countries	29	23	17	14
Developing countries	731	801	865	898
Africa	140	156	165	168
Asia	551	604	659	693
Latin America and the Caribbean	44	44	42	38
Arab States a/	49	57	64	69
Least developed countries b/	95	110	125	138

a/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

b/ Data for the least developed countries are also included in developing countries and the regions concerned.

Source: As assessed in 1982 by the Office of Statistics, UNESCO, Paris.

Table 6

Estimates and projections of illiteracy rates among population aged 15 years and over (both sexes) in major regions of the world: 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000

Region	1970	1980	1990	2000
		(percentage)		
World total	32.9	28.6	24.9	21.5
Developed countries	3.7	2.5	1.8	1.3
Developing countries	48.0	40.3	33.5	28.0
Africa	71.1	60.3	47.4	35.2
Asia	43.8	37.4	31.9	27.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	27.3	20.2	14.6	10.4
Arab States a/	72.7	62.1	50.7	40.2
Least developed countries b/	80.6	72.8	62.1	50.9

a/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

b/ Data for the least developed countries are also included in developing countries and the regions concerned.

Source: As assessed in 1982 by the Office of Statistics, UNESCO, Paris.

Table 7

Illiterate females as a percentage of the total number of illiterates (both sexes) aged 15 years and over in major regions of the world: 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000

Region	1970	1980	1990	2000
World total	58.3	59.6	60.3	60.5
Developed countries	62.1	60.9	64.7	64.3
Developing countries	58.1	59.6	60.2	60.5
Africa	57.9	59.6	61.2	62.5
Asia	58.3	59.6	60.4	60.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	56.8	56.8	57.1	55.3
Arab States a/	59.2	61.4	62.5	63.8
Least developed countries b/	55.8	57.3	58.4	59.4

a/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

b/ Data for the least developed countries are also included in developing countries and the regions concerned.

Source: As assessed in 1982 by the Office of Statistics, UNESCO, Paris.

Table 8

Disparity between the illiteracy rates of female and male populations aged 15 years and over in major regions of the world in 1980 and 2000

Region	1980			2000		
	Male	Female	F : M	Male	Female	F : M
World total	23.3	33.9	10.6	17.0	26.0	9.0
Developed countries	2.0	3.0	1.0	1.1	1.6	0.5
Developing countries	32.2	48.5	16.3	21.9	34.3	12.4
Africa	49.5	70.8	21.3	26.7	43.5	16.8
.Asia	29.6	45.4	15.8	21.8	34.1	12.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	17.9	22.5	4.6	9.4	11.4	2.0
Arab States a/	48.2	76.1	27.9	28.7	51.9	23.2
Least developed countries b/	62.7	83.0	20.3	40.9	60.9	20.0

a/ Data for the Arab States are also included in Africa and Asia.

b/ Data for the least developed countries are also included in developing countries and the regions concerned.

Source: As assessed in 1982 by the Office of Statistics, UNESCO, Paris.

The differences among developing countries in their primary education unit costs have complex historical, economic, social, cultural and political origins. The critical element is that of teachers' salaries (the largest item of primary education costs in every country). This is inextricably bound up with the role and status of teachers in the wider society and their qualifications and training. The latter in turn are linked to the requirements of the school curriculum and the overall objectives of education. It is therefore difficult to alter the pattern of costs in a radical way at least in the short run. At the same time, in many developing countries, the low salary of primary teachers, their low social status, poor motivation and inadequate professional skills are the factors that most seriously affect the quality of instruction. Diluting the already low quality of education for cost-saving will defeat the purpose of the primary school.

A large number of the least developed countries, both in Africa and South Asia which are still a long way from achieving universal primary education, are currently devoting under 2 per cent of GNP to education compared to the average of over 4 per cent for all developing countries. If they would double the share of their GNP spent on primary education, a significant impact would be made on achieving the objective of universal primary education in the foreseeable future. For these countries, this would represent a radically increased social commitment to mobilize, in addition to financial resources, the entire range of material and human resources that are potentially available.

The strategies for ensuring adequate resources for primary education and literacy will not be the same for all developing countries. As a general rule, however, efforts have to be directed to raising the efficiency of the existing resources and mobilizing additional resources, including non-budgetary ones, from all possible sources.

Curricula, books and other learning materials

The extension of schooling to groups not previously served raises the issue of the appropriateness of curricula. Existing curricula may in fact be the reason why certain marginal groups have not sought access to schooling. In some countries, the attempt to make education respond to certain socio-economic and environmental issues has resulted in overloading the content of primary and adult literacy curricula indiscriminately. As a result, both basic learning skills and the integrated approach to problem-solving have been neglected. Sound curriculum development is a vital necessity.

There is growing awareness of the critical role which textbooks play in education in developing nations. They are the instruments for self-learning both in and out of school and, to a considerable degree, can compensate for constraints in the learning environment. The World Bank Education Sector Policy Paper asserts that the availability of textbooks has been found to be the most consistently positive determinant of academic achievement. However, next to teachers, textbooks remain the most costly item required for a minimum standard of education and they are in critically short supply in the primary schools of the poorer developing countries. Similarly, shortage of appropriate reading materials for neo-literates is the most serious obstacle faced by literacy programmes in developing countries.

Since many countries have only recently formulated a national language policy (e.g. in Sub-Saharan Africa), and others are still in the process of formulating one, there has to date been little time for local publishing industries to produce the range of reading materials that is a prerequisite for large-scale efforts to extend primary education and eradicate illiteracy. Moreover, local publishing industries are themselves beset by multiple handicaps, the scarcity of authors being the most difficult to overcome. Other problems include shortages of paper, printing machinery, spare parts and skilled manpower for the printing industry itself as well as the small-scale of existing national markets.

Language of instruction

Even given the necessary budgetary resources, there remains a formidable array of other obstacles to overcome in most developing countries. A difficult one concerns the language or medium of instruction in both primary education and literacy programmes. This is an especially serious problem in Sub-Saharan Africa where most countries have a multitude of local languages and the medium of instruction is actually a foreign language for the majority of children. In literacy programmes, there is a trade-off between the advantages of teaching in the local language and the objective of integrating the ethnic and regional population groups into the mainstream of national economic and political life by teaching the national language.

To acquire literacy in a foreign language rather than in the mother tongue is a significantly greater learning task. The situation is made more difficult in most countries by shortages of books and other learning materials and by poorly trained teachers who themselves often have not fully mastered the medium of instruction. As regards literacy programmes, there are even greater shortages of primers and local-language reading materials in most countries.

Teachers

No country has made rapid progress in expanding primary education and reducing illiteracy without well-conceived programmes for supplying the necessary teachers. In most developing countries there is already a shortage of teachers in the primary schools, and adult education and literacy training activities are severely handicapped by the shortage of instructors.

Moreover, many teachers in both Africa and Asia have not completed more than the primary cycle and have received little, if any, professional training. In many countries, therefore, increased capacity for pre- and in-service training of primary teachers is required to correct existing shortages before the needs that will be generated by further expansion of primary education can be met. The problems resulting from inadequate capacity are complicated by factors which restrict the efficient use of available manpower. In many countries, transfers between regions are difficult for ethnic or linguistic reasons. This results in regional disparities when teacher-training capacity is not matched to regional requirements. Inspection and supervision services are usually over-stretched and understaffed. Consequently, teachers are neither administratively supervised nor professionally assisted. Important innovations developed elsewhere in the system may never become known in the more remote schools.

Within reasonable limits, it has been found that class size per se is not the important determinant of student achievement, contrary to common belief. There is, however, a physical limit to the number of students in a class which can be normally looked after by a teacher. This limit has been exceeded in many countries. A quarter of the African countries have pupil-teacher ratios of more than 50. In some countries 80 to 100 students in a primary classroom is not an uncommon sight.

School facilities

To a certain extent, additional primary enrolments may be accommodated by expansion of existing schools, either by adding extra facilities or by adopting such space-saving arrangements as double shifts. However, the bulk of additional enrolments will have to be accommodated in newly established facilities. The logistics are formidable even if the material resources are available.

In most developing countries it is not feasible for national authorities to undertake major school building programmes at the primary level. The tight budgetary situation makes self-help efforts by parents and local communities particularly important. In many countries there is considerable potential for mobilizing resources at the local level by encouraging parental and community initiative to help establish and support schools. In Sub-Saharan Africa and some parts of Asia, for example, it is probably a reasonable speculation that in the last two or three decades as many as half the primary schools have been built entirely by local communities on their own initiative.

There is, of course, considerable variation in the intensity of this effort between and within countries. Some countries have been better able to generate community self help than others and every country has its share of relatively poor districts where the communities have very few resources to mobilize even if the will exists. To some extent the motivation itself is dependent on the level of adult literacy in the community. Illiterate parents often are the least motivated to participate in community efforts designed to promote primary education for their children.

Organization and management

Notwithstanding the potential for self-help at the community level, effective organization and management at the national level with appropriate sharing of responsibilities at other levels of the public administration hierarchy is a prerequisite for successful large-scale programmes to expand primary education and literacy. Co-ordinated planning and action at different levels are needed to ensure that learning materials in sufficient quantity and teachers with appropriate training and in the right numbers are available at the right time and in the right places to match the increased enrolments.

In some countries, the basic data needed for planning are not available with sufficient accuracy or coverage to allow for sound plans to be drawn up, e.g. the population census is misleading due to inaccuracies of over- or under-enumeration, primary enrolment statistics are incomplete, drop-out and repeating rates are not reported. These problems often are compounded by shortages of qualified and experienced planning and data-processing personnel.

In many countries, the full implications of ambitious programmes to expand primary education and literacy activities for existing structures of educational management and administration have not been fully appreciated or accepted. Primary schools and adult literacy classes, for example, characteristically are the most geographically dispersed of all the elements of the education system. The structure of many educational administrations is over-centralized and ill-adapted to this dispersion. Often quite minor decisions concerning individual schools have to be referred to authorities located hundreds of kilometers away in the provincial or even the national capital.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR PROGRESS

The previous sections have shown that the problem of illiteracy and non-participation in primary education has many interrelated facets. The problem is one of a shortage of resources reflected in the inadequacy of physical facilities, textbooks, instructional materials, teachers and management personnel. The people's economic and social situation also stands in the way of children and adults participating in education even if the opportunities are available. It is also a problem of political will and national priorities that do not put a high enough premium on at least a minimum level of education for all. It is a problem of making primary education and literacy relevant in ways that can directly and significantly contribute to the improvement of the learner's living conditions.

It is recognised that progress in primary education and literacy will basically depend on the mobilization of indigenous resources. Although technical and financial assistance from external resources can play, it is hoped, a catalytic role, such assistance can meet only a small percentage of the needs. The effectiveness of external assistance will depend on how effectively it can be absorbed into a framework of national priorities and objectives. The question of identifying the specific and appropriate roles for external assistance, is, therefore, crucial. All of these considerations must enter into the formulation of guiding principles for action in support of national efforts to universalize primary education and literacy.

The main tasks

The main tasks that lie ahead can be put into four broad categories:

(a) To keep the child in school for the full cycle of primary education and to enforce a minimum standard of learning achievement so that the GER, which will approach the 100 per cent mark by the end of the century, can be used as a measure of learning rather than one of just nominal coverage;

(b) To ensure equitable participation by all in education, particularly the marginal and underprivileged groups who today are not able to participate fully in educational opportunities despite the overall expansion of the educational system;

(c) To undertake special national literacy programmes followed by continuing post-literacy and non-formal education opportunities, particularly in countries with high illiteracy rates. Again, special attention needs to be given to disadvantaged and marginal groups, to youth and women in particular because of the potentially high development impact of educating youth and women; and

(d) To develop the content and methods of primary education and literacy programmes so that they become meaningful to the life and circumstances of the learners and contribute towards the solution of such urgent problems as ill health, poor nutrition, polluted water and preventable death of infants and children.

The strategies for action to support national efforts for universalization of primary education and reduction of mass illiteracy will have to focus on these four major tasks; specifically, on how to create the conditions for carrying out these tasks effectively at the national and international levels.

The following discussion on strategies covers the question of: (a) creating a favourable international and national climate for action; (b) retaining students and maintaining minimum learning standards in primary schools; (c) eliminating disparities and serving the disadvantaged; (d) reinforcing interaction among different elements of basic education; (e) making special efforts in literacy and post-literacy programmes; (f) supporting basic services; (g) mobilizing resources; and (h) promoting effective organization and management.

Creating a favourable climate for action

Favourable climates for action must be created at the international as well as the national level in order to overcome the obstacles to universal primary education and literacy, to raise the awareness of people and to mobilize the human and material resources for the purpose of advancing towards this goal by the end of the century. At the international level, two main elements are needed: (a) international advocacy and consciousness-raising; and (b) international support for national efforts.

International advocacy

In all international forums including meetings of the governing and policy-making bodies of United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations, every opportunity should be taken to underscore the global nature of the problem and the need for a concerted international effort to overcome it. The critical role of primary education and literacy in addressing various global development problems should be emphasized.

Concerned inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to have primary education and literacy figure prominently in the international discussion and formulation of strategies for improving the situation of the "absolute poor". The need for a minimum level of universal education should be highlighted in carrying out poverty-focused development activities, protecting the global environment and conserving natural resouces, tackling the problem of population growth, reducing the intolerably high rate of infant and child mortality in a large part of the world, and promoting peace to ensure the survival of the human race.

Consultation and exchange of experience among international technical assistance and funding organizations on questions related to universalization of primary education and elimination of illiteracy should be encouraged and supported. The idea should be explored of holding an international conference and adopting a global declaration on "education for all" (along the lines of the 1978 Alma Ata Conference on Primary Health Care) preceded by appropriate national, regional and international preparatory work to provide impetus to progress towards the goal of universal primary education and literacy.

International support for national programmes and activities should be encouraged by identifying various potential sources of technical assistance and by facilitating contacts between country programmes and these sources. The international community should be urged to make the maximum effort to provide financial support for national programmes in the poorest countries and in the poorest regions of other developing countries.

National advocacy and awareness raising

Obviously, the countries affected by the problem constitute the ultimate arena for action. National acceptance of the goal of universal access to and participation in a minimum level of education for all citizens is a pre-condition for progress towards universalization of primary education and literacy. The advocacy activities necessary to promote this goal will include the creation of awareness concerning the nature of educational deprivation and disparities as well as the collection and dissemination of information on ways of overcoming educational disadvantages by certain groups. Advocacy has to be a continuing task until the goals of universalization of primary education and literacy are achieved.

Specific activities to promote these goals and to mobilize popular support for them may include:

(a) Analysis of the present situation and trends in order to highlight and publicize the facts, the obstacles and problems faced, past progress and the progress likely to be made under alternative future programme strategies;

(b) National and local workshops and seminars for policy-makers, planners and technical people involved in the educational programme, and public opinion leaders on the objectives and strategies of national programmes;

(c) Extensive use of the communication media, folk theatre and other means of cultural expression, voluntary organizations, participatory and representative forums at different levels (such as local government councils) to initiate nation-wide discussion on educational problems and solutions;

(d) Promotion of the adoption of a national programme in the political platform of the Government and the political parties;

(e) Use of communication channels to highlight the role of primary education and literacy in addressing critical national problems such as promoting national integration and building a democratic polity, increasing agricultural and food production, dealing with the population problem, meeting the basic needs of the masses, building the structures for community participation and local responsibility, and preserving and strengthening the national cultural identity.

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Retention of pupils and minimum learning standards in primary schools

It is clear that the single most serious problem with respect to universal primary education is that of reducing drop-out rates and keeping pupils in school until the end of the primary cycle. The internal efficiency of the educational system obviously is affected directly by drop-out rates. A 50 per cent drop-out rate in primary schools, which is not uncommon, means that a major part of the investment in primary education is wasted. A related problem is of establishing and maintaining minimum standards of teaching and learning so that when children complete the primary cycle they acquire a minimum level of proficiency in such skills as reading, writing and calculation.

Given the diversity of factors that influences drop-out and retention and the fact that the relative importance of the influences are different in different situations, no single course of action is likely to solve the problem. The causes of drop-out may be grouped under two categories: those arising from factors inside the school and those related to the social, economic and home background of the student. Specific actions to combat drop-out are described below:

(a) A combination of measures from a wide range of options can be applied in different situations in tackling the school-related causes of drop-out and the repetition which contributes to drop-out. These measures include automatic promotion, individualized attention to slow learners, ungraded schools, compensatory pre-school programmes to equalize entry level behaviour of children, attention to linguistic difficulties of children from ethnic and cultural minorities, and "feeder schools" close to homes of children in the lower grades. Everything that can be done to improve the quality of instruction (discussed below) through action with respect to curriculum, textbooks, school environment and teachers also has important consequences for drop-out and repetition.

(b) Measures concerning the non-school causes of drop-out and repetition need to be aimed at reducing the direct and indirect costs of primary education to families (including foregone earnings or contribution to family income) and at overcoming negative socio-cultural attitudes towards public education. Among these measures are the provision of school meals, free textbooks and school uniforms, subsidized travel and hostel facilities, adjusting the school calendar to the seasonal and daily requirements for helping hands at home and on the farm, recruitment of female teachers, and involvement of parents and community members in school management. Steps taken to enhance the relevance of the school programme to the local environment and development needs (considered below) also have important bearing on the attitudes of students and their families towards primary education.

(c) Appropriate actions to reduce drop-out and increase internal efficiency of primary education in a particular situation and for particular groups of people have to be based on adequate analysis and understanding of the factors that are significant in that situation and for those groups.

While progress has been made in numerical coverage of populations and trendlines can be drawn to show further progress in both primary education and literacy in the coming decades, the qualitative aspects - what students learn and the usefulness of what they learn - remain a serious problem. In fact, the question of learning achievement has reached crisis proportion in many countries where children are virtually illiterate after four or five years of primary school attendance. The level of usable skills acquired after completing a course is also a perennial question for literacy programmes. If the goal of universalization of primary education and literacy is to have any meaning, minimum standards of learning achievement must be established and ways must be found to apply these standards.

Activities that would contribute to the improvement of the performance of primary education and literacy programmes include:

(a) Establishment of minimum standards for learning achievement at different levels and stages of primary education and literacy programmes and the attainment of these targets through curricula and instruction based on the concept of a "minimum learning continuum";

(b) Use of assessment systems, including public examinations at the final stage of primary education or literacy courses, to identify weaknesses in the system, disparities in performance by social groups and geographical regions, and to gather feedback for designing remedial measures;

(c) Production and improvement of textbooks and reading materials. Making textbooks available to every student in the primary school can sometimes be the single most important thing that can be done to improve learning achievement, especially when the teachers themselves are underqualified. Similarly, well prepared primers with appropriate content are needed for literacy courses, and reading materials must be available at the post-primary and post-literacy level for maintaining and improving the skills acquired in primary schools and literacy courses;

(d) Improvement of teacher preparation, performance and morale. New approaches to teacher preparation need to be considered that would be feasible in terms of both quantitative and qualitative requirements. Combining use of communication technology, apprenticeship and a series of short pre-service and in-service courses may be more cost-effective than the full-time and lengthy pre-service training which is the standard approach. Improvement of teacher performance will also depend on an adequate supervision system that enforces standards and provides technical support and encouragement to teachers. Supervision in primary schools and literacy programmes is typically either non-existent or extremely weak. Morale of personnel connected with primary education and literacy programmes is another major issue which involves but extends beyond the question of remuneration and material incentives. According social recognition to teachers, reorganizing the personnel structure so that better qualified or more effective people can be given better remuneration and higher responsibilities, and dealing with specific problems of living and working condition (such as housing in remote areas) are some possible morale-boosting measures.

Eliminating disparities and serving the disadvantaged

The aggregate national statistics for participation in education obviously hide various forms of disparity. Four main forms of disparity are found in varying degree in different countries: between urban and rural areas, between the male and female population, between the mainstream of the population and various minority groups (cultural, linguistic, ethnic, etc.), and among different socio-economic strata. The patterns of disparity intersect, and the last category affects the others. It is necessary to untangle the pattern of unequal participation in education in specific situations, identify the trends and the main underlying factors, and consider ways of reducing the inequities as soon as possible. Disadvantaged groups and those suffering discrimination form a hard-core of difficult-to-reach populations. In many countries further progress in the overall participation rate has slowed down because of this situation. On the grounds of equity as well as to achieve overall national goals, disadvantaged groups must receive special attention in national programmes. The qualitative aspects of the programmes for many of the disadvantaged groups will also require special attention since, by definition, these groups are handicapped in various ways compared to the mainstream of society.

Specific activities to minimize imbalances and disparities will include:

(a) Analysing and publicizing the degree and nature of inequity among social and cultural groups, geographical regions and sexes;

(b) Reducing both direct and indirect costs of participating in education. Measures to this end may include: adjusting the educational time-table to demands of the learners' farm and household work; removing the burden of purchasing clothes, shoes, textbooks and lunch as a condition for joining the primary school; helping to ease the burden of the learners' household and farm activities through dissemination of appropriate technologies;

(c) Introducing specific measures to overcome social and cultural barriers. Specific solutions have to be devised according to the nature of the obstacle. Employment of female teachers to encourage higher female participation is one measure that has produced good results. Community involvement in educational planning and management will be a means of dispelling doubts and misgivings about the educational programme and its objectives. The use of traditional centres of learning such as koranic and temple schools for the early grades of primary education has been a means of stretching resources and attracting community support for primary education;

(d) Applying measures to deal with geographical obstacles. "Feeder schools" for lower grades of primary schools and "multi-grade" classrooms are solutions that have been applied for thinly dispersed populations. Peripatetic teachers and residential institutions have been used for educational programmes for nomadic populations.

Reinforcing interaction among different elements of a basic level of education

Strengthening the mutually supportive relationship between early childhood programmes, primary education, literacy and post-literacy programmes and viewing them from a broad perspective of a basic level of education geared to the community's total learning needs is an essential element of the tasks to be undertaken.

A certain level of services for the pre-school child and learning achievement in primary education and literacy and post-literacy achievement levels for youth and adults must be seen as complementary and interlinked elements of national programmes ensuring education for all. Accordingly, goals must be worked out on that basis. It is also a question of identifying the ways in which pre-school programmes, primary education and literacy and post-literacy programmes support each other in specific situations also must be identified and their mutual reinforcement promoted further. Possibilities also exist of common organizational and institutional arrangements for mobilizing local resources and community support and increasing the relevance of both primary education and literacy to the needs and circumstances of people.

Children of disadvantaged groups are clearly in greater need of public or community child-care services than those whose family and home environments are able to better cope with children's needs. A broad approach focusing on the health, nutrition, social development and intellectual and psychological growth of the young child is needed so that children of disadvantaged groups can enter and participate fully in primary education on an equal basis with all other children. There is also need and opportunity in many situations for including the care of pregnant women, perinatal care of mothers and children and the nutrition and immunization of infants and children as elements of a common community service for care and protection of the young child.

Activities to strengthen the mutually reinforcing interaction among various elements of primary education and literacy may include:

(a) Establishing minimum national targets for education for all which may be attained through the joint and co-ordinated operation of early childhood care and education, primary education, literacy and post-literacy programme or other non-formal education programmes;

(b) Planning and implementing programmes for post-primary and post-literacy continuing education with common or partially overlapping objectives, contents and organizational arrangements (including, where relevant, production of common reading materials);

(c) Promoting community responsibility and community involvement in pre-school activities, primary education and literacy and post-literacy programmes through common local organizational structures;

(d) Developing common approaches to making education relevant to local and community needs; developing the primary school into a learning centre for the entire community; and involving students and teachers in community services and community development;

(e) Initiating small-scale trial projects to develop and refine the above ideas.

Special efforts in literacy and post-literacy programmes

To accelerate the rate of reduction of illiteracy sufficiently so that the absolute number of illiterates does not continue to grow, special national efforts are obviously needed in countries which have high illiteracy rates. Literacy campaigns representing intensive, well scheduled national efforts have proved to be effective when political will combined with popular participation succeeded in unleashing resources in the form of both the services of volunteers and material aid for all sections of society. Campaigns, based on such targets as "each one, teach one" and supported by mass media, have demonstrated a capacity to motivate both the illiterates and the literacy workers.

The lessons from the more successful literacy campaigns indicate that the campaign itself has to be seen as an intensive phase of a longer-term continuing process which includes follow-up post-literacy and non-formal learning opportunities and efforts to apply literacy skills in the daily life and the social environment of the learners. A common obstacle is the insufficiency of reading materials both for literacy training and at the post-literacy stage - which reflects the shortage of resources as well as the non-literate environment in which the rural people in poor countries live. Another major problem is methodological; how to organize literacy and post-literacy activities to maximize their impact on the improvement of the quality of life of the participants. The answer to this question is not self-evident and there is no common solution to all situations. Experiences of both large-scale national and smaller voluntary organizations in literacy and post-literacy activities, however, suggest the following guidelines for planning and implementing such efforts:

(a) Programmes should be designed with a broad view of the functionalism of literacy and post-literacy activities. The purpose of literacy programmes is surely to teach the basic skills of reading and writing so that the written words become a communication tool. The goals, however, should also include:

(i) The acquisition of basic literacy skills which can be built upon so that the learner continues the process of learning;

(ii) The application of literacy skills - directly or indirectly - in improving one's productive skills and quality of life;

(iii) The generation of critical awareness of one's situation and of the possibilities of changing this situation, and moving from critical awareness and knowledge to individual and collective action for this purpose.

(b) For the full range of the functional purposes of literacy to be served and to make literacy activities part of a larger effort designed to improve basic services and activate a process of self-sustaining development, the organizational structures of literacy programmes should be linked with or be parts of organizations with broader local development responsibilities. Such organizations include local government bodies, community development organizations or voluntary organizations which have interest in promoting a range of the essential community services.

(c) Special efforts have to be made to adapt the content, methods and organization of literacy programmes to the possibilities of improving and expanding community basic services. A project like a mother and child health centre or a nutrition improvement project can become the organizational base for literacy and post-literacy activities for the participants. Conversely, a literacy group can initiate self-help projects in improving elements of the basic services in the community, thus creating the opportunities to make use of the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

(d) Literacy and post-literacy activities have to be planned as a part of a common programme for improving the educational level of the population, since an initial course without follow-up has no sustained impact. Investments have to be made in both literacy and post-literacy activities - particularly in making adequate and relevant reading materials available to the people. Efforts have to be made to create a literacy-sustaining environment in communities in which reading and writing is not a normal part of daily living. Special rural supplements of newspapers and/or periodicals produced locally and regionally for neo-literates have been found to be an effective way of increasing the supply of reading materials for new learners. The mass media have to be invited to accept and play their role in reinforcing the drive for literacy and supplementing information and knowledge disseminated with printed materials.

(e) While opportunities should not be denied to any illiterate, there is a case for concentrating literacy and post-literacy efforts on youth and women. Young people who have missed the opportunity for a primary education due to socio-economic reasons have often been found to be more motivated than others to overcome their educational deficiency. The youth in general have a longer time span to make use of their knowledge and contribute to national development than others. The impact of women's education on the well-being of children has been sufficiently documented. Women's education, therefore, is truly an investment in th future of the country.

Supporting basic services

Basic education in the form of primary education and literacy is expected to play an important role in creating awareness of underdevelopment and deprivation, in promoting collective and individual self-help efforts, in encouraging people to organize for self-help, and in acquiring new knowledge and skills necessary to improve the living condition of poverty-stricken groups. But this does not happen automatically through mere expansion of conventional primary education and literacy courses. There are implications for educational content, pedagogical approaches, training and orientation of teaching personnel and organizational arrangements for primary education and literacy programmes. On the whole, a much higher degree of decentralization and local adaptation of educational programmes, compared to present practices, and a high level of community participation will be needed if education and other basic services are expected to support each other.

Aspects of establishing linkages between literacy and basic services and adapting the educational experience to the life and circumstances of the learner have already been discussed in this section. A few pertinent points are made here to underscore the organic relationship between education and basic services.

(a) The concept of relevance, which frequently is an issue, needs to be defined in a way that will permit learning to be related to the local condition and the environment without limiting opportunities for further education and advancement in life. If primary education in rural areas is perceived as a second-rate programme denying young people opportunities outside low productivity and low-earning farming activities, the programme will not be acceptable. On the other hand, relating the school experience to development needs of the community and the participation of students and teachers in community services can help enrich the learning experience and raise its quality.

(b) The idea of primary schools and literacy programmes as the means by which knowledge, information and skills with bearing on the living condition of people are acquired should be advanced vigorously. The main elements of the basic services approach - simple technology, self help, the central role of workers from the community, and the mobilization of local resources - call for a heightened consciousness and new knowledge and skills on the part of the people. Primary education and literacy and post-literacy programmes can become the vehicle for creating this new consciousness and bringing new information and skills to people. Contents of instruction and the pedagogical methodologies have to be reviewed and developed in the light of this critical role of education in the improvement of people's lives.

(c) To facilitate mutually supportive interaction between education and other basic services, the organizational structures should have sufficient local autonomy to be able to take planning and management decisions for local programmes and to mobilize and use local resources. The organizations also should function in a way that allows meaningful participation by intended beneficiaries in formulating policies and goals and implementing programmes. The participatory process should include the representation of underprivileged and marginal groups.

Mobilizing resources and improving cost-effectiveness

Whatever programmes are initiated by national Governments (with or without external assistance) to advance towards the goal of universalization of primary education and literacy, they must be viable and sustainable in the long run in terms of national resources and institutional capacities. Since the goal is universalization, there is no point in launching a demonstration or experiment that can serve only a locality or a group with concentrated support from national or external sources but which cannot be replicated nation-wide. Shortage of resources obviously is the main obstacle to expansion and improvement of educational opportunities. Economic feasibility (relying on internal resources at least in the long run), cost-saving approaches and mobilization of new untapped resources (including advocacy for a higher share of national resources for education in countries which remain far behind the international average) must, therefore, figure prominently in the strategies considered.

Specific activities in this area will be:

(a) Analysis of resources available at the national and local levels from sources such as Governments (national and subnational), private and voluntary institutions, users' fees, and international assistance in order to determine the resource gap between what is potentially available and what is needed to carry out educational programmes at a minimum level of effectiveness;

(b) Exploration of ways to bridge the gap between minimum resource requirements and resource availability; studies and analysis leading to small-scale experimentation before specific approaches or methods become policies;

(c) Special attention to the question of recurrent costs which impose an increasingly heavy burden on national budgets. Since personnel absorb the bulk of the recurrent costs, the possibilities of restructuring cadres of educational personnel to ensure their more efficient use will need to be closely examined and new approaches tried out. Tapping new resources in the form of productive and economic activities within educational institutions and programmes and higher contribution towards cost by families of those learners who can afford it are also possibilities which can be explored;

(d) Planning the use of such external assistance as may be available in a manner which leads to a high multiplier effect.

Improving planning and management

The capacities for planning, implementation and evaluation at different tiers of the educational enterprise (both non-formal and formal) also pose a serious problem in most of the poorer countries. Building up the institutional capacity to manage the system of universal education and developing an organizational structure that allows a high degree of local responsibility and community participation should be important features of the strategy for support through the co-operative programme.

Specific activities in this area may include:

(a) Training and orientation of policy-making, executive and supervisory personnel of the national educational enterprise for the overall improvement of the national capacity for planning, implementation and evaluation;

(b) Assistance in improving the management informtion system at the national, regional and local levels, including collection, analysis and use of monitoring data; strengthening planning and evaluation capacities at different levels; and defining responsibilities at different administrative tiers with the aim of moving towards the devolution of greater responsibilities to the local level;

(c) Development of methodologies and organizational objectives for community responsibility for primary education and literacy activities. Effective ways of ensuring that the community is closely involved in planning, management and resource mobilization for education have to be explored and tried out experimentally. A local-level system of accountability can be developed so that the community can enforce a minimum standard of performance of the educational programmes;

(d) Policy and objective-oriented research, experimentation and analysis. Essential elements of the national action programme should be the identification of the major obstacles to progress, with differentiation of causes and consequences for different regions and population groups; identification of specific interventions which would be affordable and effective; small-scale experimentation and trial before a hypothesis becomes a

national policy; and in general, attention to policy and programme analysis based on relevant monitoring and evaluation data leading to better programme planning. Capacities in research and analysis should be developed in the context of planning and evaluation responsibilities at national and subnational levels of educational management. There should also be opportunities for exchanging and reviewing the results of analysis and experiments among the countries participating in the co-operative programme.

V. INTENSIFIED UNESCO-UNICEF CO-OPERATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The Joint Working Group

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Director of UNICEF agreed in April 1982 that the two organizations would intensify their co-operation in fostering the universalization of primary education and literacy. A Joint Working Group was established in June 1982 for this purpose. The Working Group was asked to analyse the nature and the magnitude of the problems with respect to achieving the goals of universal primary education and literacy, identify workable strategies for solving these problems in different circumstances, and serve as a focal point for:

(a) Helping create greater international awareness of the nature and scope of the problem and approaches to their solution;

(b) Exploring ways of mobilizing new resources and making better use of existing resources; and

(c) Assisting Governments in implementing the necessary plans and programmes including those which attempt to integrate educational activities with provisions for basic services.

The initial outcome of the intensified co-operation has been, first, the present report which sets forth an analysis of the problem and identifies strategies for progress in solving it and, second, the initiation of a process involving headquarters, regional offices and field offices of the two organizations as well as national Governments which has resulted in proposals for intensified action in five countries. The proposals for country-level activities are described in the next section.

It is expected that, in addition to the five countries for which projects are proposed this year, additional countries in similar circumstances (particularly those on the list of "the least developed and the most seriously affected") will participate in the special co-operative effort during the coming years. The cluster of countries included in the first year will not only be the beneficiaries of augmented technical and financial assistance, but they will also provide an opportunity for applying elements of the strategies outlined in this document, for gaining useful experiences and for drawing operational lessons. The body of experiences and lessons thus generated will guide the work with countries subsequently participating in the special programme and will strengthen the overall efforts of the two organizations and

the countries to achieve universal primary education and literacy. The Joint Working Group will remain the focal point of the intensified co-operation and will continue to explore how the resources of the two organizations can be used to maximum advantage and how the national plans and programmes can be assisted most effectively.

Through the focused and intensified efforts of the two organizations to work with a limited number of countries at a time, the special co-operative programme will become an effective forum for international and regional exchange of useful experiences, lessons and mutual technical support. It is hoped that the special co-operative programme will thus contribute to the development of a comprehensive international endeavour involving the collaboration of other international and bilateral donors as well as voluntary organizations which are interested in the educational progress of developing countries.

International and regional activities

In support of and in addition to direct collaboration with national efforts, the two organizations, deploying their regular resouces as well as such special contributions as may be available, will undertake certain international and regional activities, the need for which has been indicated in section IV. These activities will include;

(a) Promotion of exchange of relevant information, experiences and lessons through various means such as newsletters and publications, symposia and other meetings and exchange visits;

(b) Investigation of operational issues through surveys, studies and analyses in order to expand the body of organized knowledge upon which action can be more reliably based;

(c) Collaboration in experimental and pilot application of approaches and methods and their systematic monitoring with the purpose of determining their value on a larger scale;

(d) Selective training activities at regional and international levels for key personnel such as planners, curriculum designers and teacher trainers;

(e) Appropriate forms of international and national advocacy and consciousness-raising efforts aimed at various target groups including government authorities, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, bilateral and private funding bodies, local community leaders, parents and learners; and

(f) Facilitating co-ordination and co-operation among organizations and agencies concerned with primary education and literacy in order to maximize the impact of the total effort and reduce waste of scarce resources.

VI. COUNTRY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

As the initial result of the intensified co-operation to support national efforts to advance towards the goals of universal primary education and literacy, proposals have been prepared for assistance to five countries, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, Nicaragua and Peru. The Joint Working Group agreed that efforts should be concentrated on a small number of countries, at least initially, and that technical and financial support should be committed for at least five years in order to achieve a significant impact.

The criteria used in determining the countries to be included in the first year were: demonstration of national commitment to large-scale expansion and improvement in primary education and literacy, proportions of children and adults who are currently deprived of a minimum level of educational opportunities, the urgency of need for external financial and technical support to implement national programmes, probability of effective use of the external assistance, and geographical spread of the participating countries among the developing regions.

On the basis of the above criteria, approximately 15 countries were identified as potential participants for the first year of this special programme. After further consultation with the Governments concerned as well as with UNICEF and UNESCO field offices, the number of countries for which project proposals were to be prepared and for which external assistance was to be sought in 1983 was reduced to the five mentioned above.

Each of these proposals has been prepared jointly by the national Government and the UNICEF country office with the technical collaboration of UNESCO. The proposals identify high priority components of national programmes which are in need of external technical and financial support. They also constitute elements of programme strategies and approaches being followed in each country to pursue the objectives of universalization of primary education, reduction of illiteracy and improvement of educational opportunities. Each proposal complements or supplements other external assistance projects underway or under consideration. The proposals cover a time span of about five years. By the end of this period, successful implementaton of the proposed projects is expected to have a substantial positive impact on national programmes for universal primary education and literacy

The proposals as put forward contain, in broad terms, a statement of the objectives, implementation approach, organizational arrangements and resource requirements. In each case further elaboration of the objectives, implementation steps and the means of effective utilization of the available resources will be required. It is anticipated that, after the availability of resources is ensured, a national workshop in each country will be arranged to further review the proposals and to work on the details of implementation. The proposed external assistance will be administered by the UNICEF country offices within the framework of UNICEF co-operation with the country. Appropriate technical assistance in the preparation, implementation and review of programmes will be provided by UNESCO following the agreed procedure for co-operation between the two organizations. It is anticipated that some of the activities will be implemented in close co-operation with the World Bank and other concerned assisting agencies.

The proposals, submitted to the UNICEF Executive Board as "noted" projects, covering the five countries, are sumarized in the annex.

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ANNEX

Summary of country proposals

A. Bangladesh

Background

Of 93 million people in Bangladesh, only 20 million are estimated to be literate. The primary age population (5-9 years) is about 11.5 million and some 8.2 million children are reported to be on the rolls of primary schools. The official gross ratio of enrolment is 72 per cent but because of a very large number of children (estimated to be 40 per cent) outside the age-group in primary schools, it is difficult to establish the enrolment ratio. Moreover, a high rate of dropout (estimated at 80 per cent) means that less than 15 per cent of the age-group complete the five-year primary school. Intermittent attendance of school by children is reported to be a common feature. There are some 43,000 primary schools (7,000 are non-government) with a teaching staff of about 200,000. The physical facilities are mostly inadequate, frequently lacking sufficient classroom furniture and basic instructional equipment, e.g. the chalkboard. Twenty per cent of the teachers are without any pedagogic training and only 8 per cent are female.

The Government's second five-year plan (1980-1985) included ambitious targets for increasing enrolment in primary schools to 90 per cent of the age group and eliminating mass adult illiteracy by 1990. By 1982, following a change of the Government, the goals of the five-year plan were re-assessed and it was concluded that, to establish a meaningful literacy base in the country and to offer basic education opportunities to all, national efforts should be concentrated on the implementation of a programme of at least five years of primary education for all children. To this end various measures were proposed including:

(a) Provision of free textbooks immediately for classes I and II and eventually for all primary classes;

(b) Provision of school uniforms at government cost to all children on their promotion to class II and class IV;

(c) Increase in recruitment of female teachers and an intensive effort to upgrade teachers' competence;

(d) Greater participation of parents and the community in managing the schools and making them centres for community education including literacy programmes with community involvement;

(e) Moving towards a norm of one primary school with acceptable facilities for every 2,000 people.

Current UNICEF co-operation

The UNICEF programme of co-operation for 1982-1985 approved by the Executive Board in 1982 amounts to $24.8 million in education ($19 million of which was "noted"). It includes support for the Government's programme for universal primary education and mass education. The main components of this support are curriculum development and textbook production, teacher training, improving the management of primary education, and school-based as well as out-of-school functional education.

Since the UNICEF co-operation programme was prepared, there has been some shift in emphasis by the Government from a mass adult literacy campaign to improvement of primary education and community education based in the school. It is the Government's view that the current UNICEF co-operation programme still addresses the high priority and critical areas of concern.

UNICEF general resource assistance for 1982-1985 under the categories mentioned above includes:

(a) Improved production, distribution and use of basic teaching aids such as blackboards, chalks, maps and simple hand tools for primary schools and primary teacher training institutes;

(b) In-service training of teachers in primary schools and primary teacher training institutes and supervisory staff in districts, thanas and unions;

(c) Assistance to the National Curriculum Development Centre and the National Textbook Board for improvement of quality and content of the textbooks and production and distribution of 27.6 million textbooks for children of grades I and II;

(d) An experimental project in 300 communities to develop primary schools into community learning centres.

The "noted" component of the approved 1982-1985 programme consists of extension of the textbook development, production and distribution project to cover grades III to V with an additional 49.7 million textbooks. The project to be implemented by the National Textbook Board will also improve the technical capacities in production, storage and distribution of books and add to the printing capacity for textbooks.

Components of the Co-operative Project

The Government proposes that special support within the framework of the UNESCO-UNICEF Co-operative Programme should be geared to strengthening the implementation of the current country programme, particularly those elements which directly contribute to the achievement of national goals in basic education. It is the view of the Government and the UNICEF country office that technical support as well as funding of the "noted" projects are required

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for full and effective implementation of the country programme and efforts should be directed towards this goal rather than launching new activities which would also put additional strain on the Government's management capacity and budgets. The elements of the country programme proposed to be supported by the Co-operative Programme are:

(a) Production of textbooks and instructional materials including technical support for improving content and production quality, and achieving maximum economy in use of textbooks ("noted" project approved by the Executive Board in 1982);

(b) Publication and distribution to all primary schools of a quarterly primary teachers' bulletin containing basic advice and tips on handling the curriculum and the classroom at each grade level and for different subjects during the particular quarter. The bulletin would reinforce other training activities and instructional materials, help maintain continuous contacts with teachers and local primary education instructors and boost the morale of primary teachers;

(c) An assessment of bottlenecks and constraints in effective use of resources including UNICEF assistance in key areas related to primary and basic education. A series of assessments and analyses on a number of critical questions concerning the situation of the learners, the teachers, the curriculum and instructional materials and local management of schools will be carried out in 1983 and 1984 which would provide operational guidelines for improving implementation during the current programme cycle and lay the groundwork for submission to the 1985 Executive Board.

These elements of the country programme complement other UNICEF basic services activities, particularly those focusing on the improvement of nutrition, health care and the income-earning potential of underprivileged groups. They will also reinforce and draw support from other national efforts in universalization of primary education, especially the World Bank-assisted project for universalization of primary education in 40 thanas and projects for improvement of teacher training and school management currently under preparation for UNDP-UNESCO support.

There are opportunities for better use of resources which must be exploited fully. With the present pyramid-pattern of student enrolment, classes in grades I and II are very large whereas grades V and VI may have only a few students, especially in rural schools. Multi-grade classes at the higher level and more than one teacher in each of the lower grades will therefore lead to better utilization of teachers and improvement in learning achievement. By instituting a loan system, the textbook - which is the next major item of recurrent cost after teachers - can be used for three or four years rather than just one year. A large number of textbooks for each grade can be consolidated into two or three basic books and the savings can be used for supplementary reading materials which are almost non-existent now. Standardization of size and format of books also can help reduce printing, storage and transportation costs. Exploring all possibilities for economy in the production and use of textbooks and supplementary materials as well as the improvement of their content will be important features of the proposed

"noted" project for textbooks and reading materials. The assessment project focuses on other aspects of improvement and efficient use of resources, particularly better deployment and improved performance of teachers. The findings of this project will provide guidance for practical action to achieve efficiency and economy in the system.

All of the above activities can be carried out within the current country programme framework. The resources, except for the "noted" project for textbooks for which funding has to be secured, will be available from the approved country programme. The proposal will be examined further, the implementation steps will be elaborated, allocations among different elements will be reviewed and the best use of available resources will be determined when prospects for funding the project become clearer. The qualitative aspects of curriculum and textbooks, which remain a continuing concern in the regular programme of UNICEF, will be given special attention in working out the details of the project.

External assistance requirements (1983-1988)

The breakdown for the "noted" project, as approved by the 1982 Executive Board and for which funds are required, is as follows:

Activity	Cost (US dollars)
Procurement of paper for textbooks and other reading materials (11,600 tons of white off-set paper and 1,500 tons of cover paper for production of 49.7 million textbooks for grades III to V)	11,200,000
Supply of printing equipment for production of textbooks and reading materials	3,000,000
Supply of consumables for printing of books	1,800,000
Supply of warehouse and distribution equipment	270,000
Provision of technical assistance for machinery erection, training in printing, management, storage and distribution	280,000
Subtotal	16,550,000
Freight	2,500,000
Total	$19,050,000

Inclusion of the above components of the country programme in the Co-operative Programme will facilitate securing appropriate implementation support from both UNESCO and UNICEF headquarters and regional offices and, it is hoped, will improve the prospect for funding the already approved "noted" project.

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B. Ethiopia

Background

Since the 1974 revolution, the Government has laid the groundwork for progress towards overcoming the handicap of the population's extremely low educational level by rapidly expanding primary education and by launching a national campaign to eradicate illiteracy. By 1982, the gross primary school enrolment rate had risen to 46 per cent compared to 18 per cent in 1973. The illiteracy rate, through the continuing campaign since 1979, is reported to have been reduced to about 60 per cent.

The problems associated with rapid expansion in a very poor country are evident in all the components of the basic education network. Textbooks, teaching staff and facilities have not kept pace with the growth of enrolment. The most serious problem seems to be the number and quality of the teaching staff. The overall teacher-student ratio has increased to 1 to 66, but in many schools the ratio is 1 to 120. Only about half the teachers have a one-year teaching diploma received after high school; the others are secondary graduates or even drop-outs from high schools. Detailed information on drop-out of primary students is not available, but a calculation of progression rate suggests at least 55 per cent drop-out from grades I to VI.

While commendable results have been achieved in mobilizing national enthusiasm and resources for the literacy campaign, the question remains whether a relapse into illiteracy can be prevented and the skills initially acquired can be utilized in functional ways and further improved.

The key question for future development in primary education and literacy is how to build upon the progress made to date. A quantitative base has been constructed through rapid expansion in a short time. This achievement must be consolidated and strengthened for future growth on a solid foundation by focusing now on the qualitative aspects of the system. Upgrading the skills and performance of teachers must be high on the agenda for improving primary education. Ways have to be found to clear the backlog of untrained and underqualified teachers and to ensure minimum qualifications and competence of teachers coming into the system. Another aspect of maintaining a minimum performance level of the system is to build the capacity to monitor and evaluate the system, to identify critical constraints and shortcomings and to devise feasible and affordable ways of tackling the shortcomings - in other words, to develop a modest capacity for practical analysis and assessment of problems and solutions within the educatonal management structure at the national and subnational levels.

The Director-General of UNESCO made an international appeal in 1981 for support to the national literacy campaign and significant contribution, both financial and material, has been received from the international community. There is, however, an urgent need for additional international assistance to carry out the national programmes in education.

Current UNICEF co-operation

The major area of UNICEF co-operation continues to be the national effort to expand and improve primary education. Some two thirds of UNICEF assistance goes to the upgrading of teachers' qualifications. Other activities are primary level curriculum improvement and strengthening educational planning and management. The non-formal education activities which supplement and reinforce the formal school programme are designed for the underserved population groups. The main items are use of radio to improve primary level instruction, provision of communication support to such basic services as health care and water supply, a "basic education" project directly related to the improvement of people's living conditions (mostly in re-settlement areas) and the production of reading materials for neo-literates. Total proposed general resources assistance for education for the period 1983-1988 will amount to $8.4 million.

Components of the Co-operative Project

The Government proposes four high priority activities to be supported by technical and financial assistance from the UNESCO-UNICEF Cooperative Programme:

(a) In-service training of 10,000 underqualified primary teachers over a period of five years;

(b) Developing a research and evaluation capacity and carrying out studies and analyses of selected issues which have a direct bearing on the expansion and qualitative improvement of primary education and the literacy programme;

(c) Assisting the on-going curriculum materials development project at the primary level which includes preparation of new materials (student texts, teachers' guides and workbooks), trying them in schools on a pilot basis and disseminating them through teacher orientation and appropriate supervision;

(d) Producing post-literacy reading materials in major regional languages and supporting the activities of 214 additional basic development education centres, with the aim of helping to apply new knowledge and skills in improving the people's living conditions.

The in-service training project will be carried out during five consecutive summers for each group of trainees to bring them up to the level of those with regular teaching diplomas. The training will be arranged in the teacher training institutes using their facilities and staff. The in-service training will help eliminate the training gap between those qualified by the training institutes and those unqualified people hired every year to meet the demand. The project will complement the on-going teacher upgrading project supported from the regular budget of UNICEF.

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The research and evaluation capacity project will include several elements: short-term training and orientation seminars for personnel at different levels to be involved in the research and evaluation activities; improving the monitoring and management information system at national and subnational levels, identifying planning and operational problems and conducting selective investigations, utilization of findings in programme planning and implementation and short-term technical support from international experts. The investigations will deal with critical operational issues including retention and minimum learning achievement of students, articulation of the curricular process and teacher preparation and supervision, improving teacher performance, involvement of parents and communities in local education management and developing a system of community accountability for education, and exploring ways of meeting the resource gap (between what is available and what is needed to maintain a minimum performance level) for basic education at the community level.

The development of primary level curriculum materials - through a process of materials preparation, trial at school-level, teacher-orientation and dissemination of materials - is aimed at removing a major deficiency in instructional materials in primary schools. UNICEF's regular programme will continue to support this on-going project. The "noted" project will help expand the scope of the project and accelerate the dissemination of the new materials.

The proposal for production of post-literacy materials and support to basic development education centres will also help expand the scope of current activities which are supported by UNICEF's regular programme.

External assistance requirements (1983-1988)

The breakdown of costs for the Co-operative Project activities is as follows:

Activity	Cost (US dollars)
In-service teacher education project stipends, transportation, educational materials for teachers	1,200,000
Research and evaluation capacity development training and seminars, vehicles, supplies and selected studies	550,000
development, trial and dissemination of primary level curriculum materials (student texts, teachers' guides and workbooks)	700,000
Production of post-literacy reading materials and support for the activities of 214 new basic development education centres in economically disadvantaged areas	3,300,000
Total	$5,750,000

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C. Nepal

Background

About two thirds of the 15 million people of Nepal live in isolated mountain hamlets often days' or even weeks' walk from the nearest road. The Government has made an effort to provide at least three years of primary education within the reach of every hamlet. However, only about half of the children actually attend the schools and a large proportion of girls and those from lower socio-economic groups never go to school. About 60 per cent of primary teachers are unqualified and the quality of instruction is such that the three-year cycle often does not produce a usable level of literacy.

Under the fourth, fifth and sixth national five-year plans, great emphasis has been placed on adult functional literacy, but the lack of teacher training, supervision, follow-up activities and reading materials has led to poor results. The literacy rate was officially reported to be 24 per cent (5 per cent among women) in 1980. The effective literacy rate is likely to be much lower in the rural areas.

The following major problems have to be tackled before substantial progress can be made towards universal primary education and elimination of illiteracy:

(a) Enrolment of school-age children must be increased significantly among females and the disadvantaged groups; the attendance rate has to be increased and the drop-out rate reduced;

(b) Teachers' competence must be raised and they have to be brought under professional supervision;

(c) Local communities should play an active role in increasing enrolment and attendance and supervising schools as well as adult education activities;

(d) School facilities should be functional and more easily accessible to students;

(e) Textbooks should contain materials relevant to the 90 per cent of the rural children; relevant literacy and post-literacy materials should also be available to participants of literacy programmes.

Current UNICEF co-operation

UNICEF, in collaboration with UNESCO in a number of instances, is currently involved in activities designed to improve basic education, including: physical improvement of primary schools; production and supply of primary textbooks; training of headmasters, teachers and supervisors; support for educational planning; and a pilot basic education project related to rural development in a remote rural area (Seti). Other related external assistance projects include the United States Agency for International Development-financed project for teacher training through radio, and an International Development Assistance loan for primary education improvement in six districts (out of 75), still under negotiation. The present proposal will draw on the experiences of several of these activities and help expand and supplement some of them.

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Components of the Co-operative Project

Major objectives of the project are:

(a) To assist the Government in the propagation of the more successful innovative approaches (from the Seti project and other experiences);

(b) To encourage increased enrolment and attendance in depressed areas and amongst deprived groups, and;

(c) To provide materials to ensure that literacy is acquired, retained and used.

The main activities for achieving the above objectives will be:

(a) Functional literacy. The project will select the best training materials and methods from several small-scale non-formal education projects and will develop prototype literacy courses for wide replication. The project will initially serve some 40,000 people in selected areas and will include elements of training, supervision, supply of instructional materials and provision of essential physical inputs.

(b) Non-formal education for deprived school-age children. On the basis of experience of the UNESCO-UNDP-UNICEF-supported Seti project, materials and methods for basic education will be developed and used for 30,000 children among the disadvantaged groups.

(c) An experimental activity will be carried out to produce and distribute materials for neo-literates and to establish village reading centres in some 1,200 communities.

(d) Improved content and physical quality of primary textbooks. In collaboration with the Curriculum and Textbook Supervision and Development Center (CTSDC), a concentrated effort will be made in this area. An international specialist employed from the current UNICEF country programme will guide the activity. Supply of some spare parts for the government textbook printing facility and training for technical staff will be a part of the activity. Production of supplementary reading materials for the primary grades will be supported from the project.

(e) Textbooks and basic supplies. With the aim of benefiting from an integrated approach, textbooks and basic supplies will be provided free of charge to children of disadvantaged groups in selected areas where other basic services activities assisted by UNICEF are being carried out.

(f) Continuing reporting of project activities will provide the mechanism for cumulative evaluation and review of progress and results.

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Once the prospects and sources of external assistance are clearer, a national workshop with the participation of national personnel and UNICEF and UNESCO staff members will be held in order to review and clarify the above proposal. The organizational and administrative aspects and the implementation steps will be given special consideration. Similar workshops may be arranged annually for stock-taking and planning subsequent project activities.

External assistance requirements (1983-1985)

The following table shows the breakdown among main activities and the funds required from external resources over a period of five years beginning late 1983:

Activity	Cost (US dollars)
Functional literacy	400,000
Non-formal programmes for deprived children	300,000
Maintenance of literacy	50,000
Curriculum development and printing and production of texts and supplementary materials	830,000
Textbooks and school supplies for selected groups	300,000
Monitoring and reporting	20,000
Total	$1,900,000

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D. Nicaragua

Background

Of 2.5 million people in Nicaragua (according to the 1979 census), almost half are under 15 years of age and slightly less than half live in rural areas.

In 1979, over 50 per cent of the adults in the country were illiterate. Three quarters were illiterate in rural areas. Impressive gains have been made in reducing illiteracy since the launching of the national literacy campaign - from an estimated 50 per cent in 1979 to under 25 per cent at present. The year 1990 has been set as a tentative date by which to reach the goal of eradication of illiteracy.

Progress towards the goal of universal literacy and improvement of the educational level of the population can be seriously hampered unless the situation in primary education changes significantly. One quarter of the children between 7 to 12 years do not go to school and over 50 per cent of those enrolled in the first year do not move on to the second year of school. Only 5 per cent of the children in some rural areas complete the primary cycle.

One of the problems is that a large number of primary schools have less than four grades; this proportion is 55 per cent in the rural areas. Another shortcoming is that teachers generally have a low level of general education and very limited professional training - 52 per cent of the rural teachers have less than nine years of schooling and no training. Many of the students are older than the age expected for their grade. The curriculum and teaching methods do not adapt to either the age-range of students or the need for multi-grade classes in order to offer a full cycle of primary education.

The government programme for a basic popular education is aimed at bringing 95 per cent of children between 7 to 12 years to school by 1990, substantially reducing the drop-out and repetition rates, upgrading teachers' skills, designing curricula and teaching methods for over-age students and multi-grade classes, and ensuring minimum facilities for four grades of primary school in all rural areas.

Current UNESCO and UNICEF co-operation

Different international organizations including UNICEF and UNESCO have been co-operating with Nicaragua in its national reconstruction plans, particularly in the massive literacy campaign. The Director-General of UNESCO launched an international appeal in support of the literacy campaign and significant financial and material contributions were received. UNESCO also has helped execute World Bank- and UNDP-assisted activities in primary education development. UNICEF assistance in education under the current country programme (1982-1985) is concentrated on developing pre-school non-formal education centres (CEFNE's) which serve children between ages 3 to 6 of the rural and urban marginal groups. Training of personnel, supply of essential materials and evaluation activities are supported from UNICEF assistance. Promotion of oral rehydration and breast-feeding is seen as a part of pre-school services. At the primary level, UNICEF has assisted an experimental work-study project in five rural primary schools. These schools offer basic primary education with a heavy emphasis on agricultural training.

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Components of the Co-operative Project

The project will be implemented in three rural areas identified by the Government in the regions of Rivas, Rio San Juan and Rama in the southern part of the country.

The objectives of the project are:

(a) To design and apply a non-traditional curriculum for basic popular education, bearing in mind the large population of over-age children in primary schools and the need for multi-grade class rooms, etc.;

(b) To design and produce teaching materials for the new curriculum approach;

(c) To introduce appropriate teacher training in conformity with the curriculum;

(d) To supply basic instructional equipment for schools and hand tools to support construction of educational facilities by communities; and

(e) To improve monitoring and analysis to support the implementation of the project.

Specific activities to be carried out in each selected location to achieve the above objectives have been identified, but will need to be reviewed and elaborated further. The selected areas will serve as testing ground for multi-grade teaching, new curriculum materials and other activities aimed at improving primary education before these are spread nation-wide.

The implementation of the project will require delineation of responsibilities and actions at both the central ministry level and at the regional level, within the framework of the Government's policy for decentralization/regionalization of political and administrative stuctures. Popular participation in communities will be a strong feature of the project, with the involvement of mass organizations and parents through existing local institutional structures such as Colectivos de Educacion.

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External assistance requirements (1983-1988)

The breakdown of the total external assistance required over a period of five years is given below:

Activity	Cost (US dollars)
Central level	
Training of personnel at national and regional levels	120,000
Supplies and equipment	60,000
Development and production of educational materials	410,000
International technical support	190,000
Regional level	
Upgrading of teachers' skills	290,000
Supplies and equipment for reproduction of instructional materials	150,000
Strengthening supervision of teachers	220,000
Basic equipment for schools	220,000
Supplies (tools) for community construction of educational facilities	270,000
Total	$1,930,000

It should be noted that further work will be needed on defining operational steps for implementation and on effective use of available resources once the prospects for financial assistance become clearer. Technical collaboration for this purpose will be available from the headquarters and the regional offices of UNESCO and UNICEF.

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E. Peru

Background

Of 18 million Peruvians (according to the 1981 census), approximately 45 per cent were in the age group 0 to 15 years. The National Multisectoral Plan for Literacy 1981-1985, prepared by the Ministry of Education in 1981, listed the rate of illiteracy at 27.3 per cent for the population above 15 years of age (using the 1972 census). This illiterate population was distributed as follows: 28 per cent in urban areas and 72 per cent in rural zones; 70 per cent of the illiterate population was female. With respect to school drop-outs, it is noted that only some 30 per cent of the population finishes primary school. Furthermore, as Peru is a multilingual country with a sizeable indigenous population, the problem of illiteracy is concentrated in indigenous areas.

In the Government's five-year plan for 1981-1985, high priority has been given to:

(a) Development of primary education to provide easy access to deprived sections of the population;

(b) Substantial reduction of illiteracy;

(c) Teacher training.

The General Law of Education of May 1982 establishes as its objectives the democratization of education and the broadening of access to initial and primary education and literacy. The concern of the Peruvian Government about the educational level of its citizens has resulted in the development of an integrated educational programme at three levels: pre-school, primary and adult. With reference to primary education and literacy, strategies have been established to link these two with compatible curricula and with methodologies based on local circumstances. The priority targets are both rural and marginal urban populations. Literacy programmes are to be carried out in the mother tongue with simultaneous introduction of Spanish.

Current UNESCO and UNICEF co-operation

Different international organizations including UNICEF and UNESCO have been co-operating with Peru in the implementation of the National Multisectoral Plan for Literacy. UNESCO is currently executing a project, funded by UNDP, for the development of literacy and non-formal education through audio-visual media. The 1983-1985 UNICEF programme of co-operation includes commitment of assistance for non-formal education covering elements of pre-school, basic and adult education in the amount of $1.4 million. The main activities are training of pre-school education promoters, basic adult education promoters and supervisors of these activities, as well as technical support for planning and evaluation at the national and regional levels. The present proposal will draw on and supplement these activities.

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Components of the Co-operative Project

Peru proposes to launch an experimental project in one rural (Cuzco) and one urban (Chimbote) location to adapt the content and methods of pre-school, primary and non-formal education programmes to the needs and circumstances of the communities. The project would conform with the national goal of enhancing the quality and out-reach of education and relating the educational services to specific development needs of communities and different segments of the population. The proposed experiment will provide useful lessons and operational guidelines for achieving the national goals.

The main components of the project are:

(a) To develop in phases a programme of comprehensive care for children under 6 years of age by introducing appropriate education, health and nutrition activities. The activities would include early stimulation and non-formal education, prevention of diseases and immunization, supplementary feeding with community support, guidance to parents about nutrition and health-promotion and care of children, guidance to pregnant and nursing mothers, and review and adaptation of the curriculum for early childhood education;

(b) To promote an integrated programme of education, health and nutrition for children between ages 6 and 12. The primary school-based activities will require the collaboration of parents and the health and educational authorities and will be focused on the improvement of teaching and learning of the basic skills (reading, writing and arithmetic) in the primary schools; better preventive and promotive health services for children and improvement in nutrition knowledge and practices for children and their families; and

(c) To conduct a non-formal educational programme for people over age 12, concentrating particularly on illiterate youth and women. The educational programme will be flexible to allow combinations, geared to different groups, of elements of literacy, skill development in agriculture and handicrafts, and promotion of appropriate technologies for the household and the community.

The project will be implemented in the two locations (10-15 communities in each location) through a Technical Committee consisting of representatives of the communities and of the concerned government agencies including education, health, agriculture, fisheries, labour and industry as well as local government bodies and local grass-roots organizations. A Project Co-ordinator appointed by the Minister of Education will have responsibility for the day-to-day management. The project activities will cut across conventional jurisdictions of different ministries and departments within the Ministry of Education. Activities will be integrated on the basis of the needs and circumstances of the participants in the communities. The main phases of the project, implemented over a five-year period beginning in late 1983 will be: (a) analysis, elaboration of the implementation plan, and orientation and training of personnel; (b) implementation of the main activities; and (c) consolidation, evaluation and planning for the future.

The project will be financed from contributions of the national Government, the communities, UNICEF and UNESCO. The contribution of the Government of Peru is estimated to be $2 million over the five-year period; another $2 million is expected to be available in "noted funds" from UNICEF. UNESCO will provide technical support from both the regional office and headquarters as needed. External financial and technical assistance will be co-ordinated by the UNICEF country office in consultation with the project authorities.

External assistance requirements (1983-1988)

The breakdown for the co-operative project is as follows:

Activity	Cost (US dollars)
Programme for children under 6 years of age	700,000
Programme for primary school children	500,000
Non-formal education for youth and women	800,000
Total	$2,000,000

The funds will be used for staff support, essential supplies, training of personnel and monitoring and evaluation. Detailed breakdown of costs, time phasing and measures for effective use of national, community and external resources will be given further consideration in a national workshop when the availability of finances is assured.